The Ohio State University (OSU) is imposing by any dimension. Its 64,000 students make it the third largest higher education institution in the United States. The research budget is closing in on $1 billion. Recently it generated nearly a half-billion dollars for its endowment by leasing to an Australian firm the concession to operate the campus parking garages for 50 years. When it piloted an undergraduate mentorship program that came with a $2,000 carrot that could be used for education abroad, it started with 1,000 students. “We don’t do anything small in Ohio State,” said Dolan Evanovich, vice president for strategic enrollment planning.
But five years ago its president, provost, and faculty decided that Ohio State was not sufficiently international. They set out to remedy that in a hurry. Today Ohio State has what it calls Global Gateway offices in Shanghai, China, Mumbai, India, and São Paulo, Brazil’s largest city, and it’s eyeing which continent will be next. International enrollments have rocketed from 4,000 to 6,000, mostly due to a large influx of Chinese undergraduates, who now comprise two-thirds of all 3,600 students the world’s largest country sends off to Columbus. Education abroad enrollments have spiked from 1,716 to 2,255, thanks to a switch from quarters to semesters and the introduction of May session courses. Deans of the 14 colleges have embraced the strategy, recognizing internationalization is vital to their mission, not to mention their job evaluation.

Even colleges deeply engaged for years in overseas research and partnerships now see new doors opening. Bruce McPheron, dean of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences, said, “This gateway strategy provides an opportunity not only to build lasting partnerships with other scholars, but with the private and public sectors, just like we do here as a land grant university.”

What’s taking place, said Vice Provost for Global Strategies and International Affairs William Brustein, is that internationalization has become rooted in “the campus community’s DNA.” Sherri Geldin, director of Ohio State’s showcase Wexner Center for the Arts, which just mounted an exhibition on the work of contemporary Brazilian artists and filmmakers, observed, “It’s nothing we even have to think about very consciously. It just happens.”

**New Leadership and Status for International Affairs**

Ohio State wooed Brustein from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2009 by elevating the position of senior international officer to the rank of vice provost and including him in the Council of Deans. Brustein also was promised “that he would have the attention of not only the provost, but also the president. Symbolically that’s critical,” said Joseph Alutto, provost at the time and later interim president after E. Gordon Gee stepped down in 2013 (it was the globally minded Gee who set a goal of making Ohio State “the land grant university to the world”).

“This university was punching under its weight when it came to comprehensive internationalization,” said Brustein, who also was given an office in Bricker Hall on the Oval amidst the rest of the university’s leadership. “A lot was going on in the colleges, but in terms of having signature university programs and an institutional strategy, those didn’t exist.” Kelechi Kalu, a professor of African American and African Studies, was tapped in 2012 for associate provost, overseeing day-to-day operations of the Office of International Affairs (OIA) in century-old Oxley Hall.

A President’s and Provost’s Council on Strategic Internationalization prepared a detailed blueprint for engaging more faculty and students in global learning, teaching, and research. Undergirding the strategy were what the council called its six “pillars”: recruiting more international faculty and students, promoting scholarship on global issues, creating dual-degree programs, developing an international physical presence, increasing international experiences for students, and collaborating with alumni and Ohio business ventures.

Ohio State has embarked on a 10-year, $400 million initiative to hire 500 new, interdisciplinary faculty to pursue breakthroughs on
the “grand challenges of the twenty-first century” in three realms: energy and environment, food production and safety, and health and wellness. These Discovery Themes, as Ohio State calls them, all have deep international dimensions.

**Understanding the Worth of Global Gateways**
Ohio State leaders originally thought the gateway offices could largely cover their $250,000-a-year costs by generating revenues from executive training, which would subsidize recruiting and academic activities. Professors would fly in from Columbus to provide executive training in short bursts. But “the price points for delivering executive-type education in China and India are not what they are here in the U.S.,” said Christopher Carey, a West Point graduate who is Global Gateways director.

The original business model, Brustein said, “was overly ambitious” and undervalued the academic benefits accruing from these overseas outposts. “We said, ‘Let’s look at what the gateways are doing in terms of assisting the quantity and quality of the students who are coming here, particularly from China, and let’s monetize that. Let’s look at (how) they’re facilitating faculty teaching and research collaborations. Let’s look at the monetary value of the new internships and study abroad programs that we’ve created,’” he recalled. That reasoning carried the day.

New dual-degree programs have sprouted with Shanghai Jiao Tong University and other institutions. The gateways energized local Buckeye alumni, one of whom donated prime office space in Mumbai. With a half-million living alumni, Buckeyes are everywhere. “We just started our own alumni club in Shanghai,” boasted David Williams, dean of the College of Engineering. “We’re building the same kind of network for engineers we have here in this country.” The gateway also gives Ohio State an edge in recruiting “fabulous” Shanghai Jiao Tong students for graduate school, he added.

“None of this is cheap, but if you’re going to do it, you have to do it well,” said Alutto, the former longtime dean of the Fisher College of Business, who returned to the faculty after Ohio State’s new president, Michael Drake, took office this summer.

**Ramping Up Student Services and Friendship**
As recently as a quarter century ago, Ohio State had open admissions and nearly nine in 10 students were from Ohio. As it raised standards, it attracted more out-of-staters and international students, who together now make up nearly a third of the student body. Engineering and business are the biggest draws for the 6,000 international students.

The emphasis now is not on driving that number higher, but diversifying the pool and improving the experience when they reach Columbus. “We’re concentrating on making sure that our students are well taken care of, feel welcome, and integrate well into the fabric of Ohio State,” said Gifty Ako-Adounvo, international student and scholar services director.

Improved services come at a price. Ohio State in 2012 added a $500 per-term fee to tuition for new international undergraduates to expand academic support and extracurricular programs, provide more English proficiency instruction, and offer more housing options. It also underwrote the $175,000 cost of flying a 10-person team from admissions, international affairs, and student life to China to hold full-blown preorientation sessions for hundreds of incoming students and their parents.

The raft of extracurricular programming includes weekly “Global Engagement Nights” that bring dozens of U.S. and international students together. Xin Ni Au, 21, a nutrition major from Johor, Malaysia, attended nearly every one, became a volunteer Global Ambassador, and exuberantly greeted new arrivals at an OIA booth at the Columbus airport.
Au, a junior, transferred to Ohio State just nine months earlier, but with help from two Malaysian students she found on Facebook, she threw herself into campus life. She’s still surprised “how friendly people are. People smile and say, ‘Hi. How are you?’ and everything. Frankly, you don’t get that in Malaysia.”

Tianxia “Mark” Gu, 22, a senior from Shanghai, also became a Global Ambassador. The gregarious Gu said he was “pretty shy” before coming to Columbus, but now counts more than 50 students as close friends. A self-described “super sports fan,” he “learned the Buckeye pride before I came here.” He credits his American accent to watching reruns of the sitcom Friends back in Shanghai and considers Monica, the perfectionist, a role model. The finance and math major wants to return to China and develop job search software to help people “build their dream.”

Tackling Rabies and Cervical Cancer in Ethiopia
Wide-ranging partnerships in Ethiopia with universities, government agencies, and NGOs testify to the breadth of resources Ohio State can summon to address endemic health problems. Its “One Health” initiative musters administrators, faculty, and students from all seven OSU health science colleges, as well as the business college and others. Already the collaboration has laid the groundwork for a mass campaign to vaccinate dogs against rabies and introduce cervical cancer screening in places where that has never been done.

Spearheading the One Health work in Ethiopia is Wondwossen Gebreyes, a veterinary molecular epidemiologist. “We’ve been teaching courses there every summer since 2009,” said Gebreyes. “For the past two years we’ve adopted the One Health model and expanded the disciplines.” For him, One Health is a way to pay back the poor farmers whose cattle Gebreyes once treated after earning a veterinary degree at Addis Ababa University (he also has a PhD from North Carolina State). “I got all my education in Ethiopia for free on their shoulders,” he said.

Usha Menon, vice dean of the College of Nursing, has journeyed to Addis Ababa four times to teach and prepare a pilot cervical cancer screening program in the Amhara region. A half-dozen nursing students accompanied her on the last trip. Nearly 90 percent of cervical cancer occurs in the developing world, where four of five women have never been screened, said Menon, who came to Ohio State in 2012. “I’ve never seen this level of collaboration at other schools among the health sciences.” Menon encountered fewer bureaucratic hurdles for her screening since Gebreyes already had secured permission from the Ethiopian government for the larger One Health project. “That’s the joy of Ohio State for me. Cross-collaboration makes these things much easier to do. I don’t have to start from scratch,” she said.

Tom Gregoire, dean of the College of Social Work, made his first visit to Ethiopia with the One Health team and will return to teach a graduate course. Did the College of Social Work need a kick to internationalize? No, Gregoire said, but the strategic plan “sent a signal from the top and created more enthusiasm around it. It’s more sanctioned. There’s a zillion things one can do around here and a good plan helps you choose.”

Teaching Critical Languages
Ohio State has six Title VI national resource centers, including the National East Asian Languages Resource Center. The Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures offers more than 160 language courses and in 2012 received a three-year, nearly $10 million grant to administer the U.S. State Department’s Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program to establish intensive summer language institutes at partner universities in China, Japan, and Korea.

Professor Galal Walker underscored the difficulty the United States faces in producing enough graduates fluent in these lan-
There are 200,000 Chinese studying in the United States and about 15,000 Americans studying in China, most in very low-level, short-term classes, sometimes with no language at all,” he said. While Mandarin course enrollments have grown to 60,000 at U.S. campuses, 50,000 are at beginner levels, said Walker.

Walker is doing his part. He runs a two-year master’s program that prepares Americans to work in China-related careers. They do internships in China and spend the second year taking regular classes at a Chinese university. “The idea is to provide our students a basis for having sophisticated interactions with Chinese counterparts, the kind of educated people you meet in large companies and corporations,” said Walker.

Briun Greene, one of those graduate students, first learned Mandarin as a linguist for the Army. Recently he was tapped to serve as the interpreter for a visiting Chinese business delegation at a big trade show in Las Vegas. (The company flew in several of Walker’s students as its guests.)

“You have to be really fast on your feet to do that. He did a great job,” said the professor. The problem is that “very few get up to Briun’s level, which takes 2,500 hours of instruction—more than it takes to earn a law degree.” Greene sees his future as an entrepreneur in China. “I love living in Asia. I felt the most alive there,” he said.

Preparing STEM Faculty for India

When the U.S. Department of State announced in June 2013 that Ohio State had won a prestigious Obama-Singh 21st Century Knowledge Initiative award to expand India’s pipeline for producing science and engineering faculty, astrophysicist Anil Pradhan received accolades as the driving force behind the effort. Two OSU colleagues and a professor at partner Aligarh Muslim University are codirectors.

But Pradhan says “20 to 30 busy people” at OSU and an equal number at the Uttar Pradesh, India, university helped prepare the complex proposal. Ohio State also matched his $150,000 grant and
LESSONS

LOOK AT THE CALENDAR. An Ohio State switch from quarters to semesters in 2012 paid an immediate dividend for study abroad. Faculty created two dozen new, four-week education abroad courses. Five hundred students signed up for May 2013 and more than 800 in spring of 2014. “That chunk of May seems to be a really good fit for our demographic,” said Study Abroad Director Grace Johnson. Previously the spring quarter ran into mid-June. Now students get out of classes at the end of April, can study abroad in May, and still have the summer for a job or internship.

DON’T SPREAD RESOURCES THIN. Five years into Ohio State’s comprehensive internationalization strategy, what stands out to Executive Vice President and Provost Joseph Steinmetz is that “you can’t do everything. Invest in fewer things, but do them really well.” The peril for an Ohio State is to “spread funds around like peanut butter so everybody is happy. We’ve been much better off concentrating on projects like the May session, study abroad, and fine-tuning (intensive) English programs.” Tight times are no excuse, said Interim President Joseph Alutto. “I don’t know of any university that cannot find resources to do international things if they think it’s important.”

GET BUY-IN ACROSS THE CAMPUS. Elevating the status of the senior international officer to vice provost signaled loud and clear the commitment of Ohio State’s president and provost to comprehensive internationalization. William Brustein, who came on board as the new vice provost for global strategies and international affairs just as a faculty committee was shaping the ambitious strategic plan, said the importance of that blueprint was that it set “university-wide goals, not just goals for the international affairs office.” Powerful deans took notice. In a nutshell, Brustein said, the formula is “teamwork, teamwork, teamwork.”

CONVINCE THE FACULTY AND STUDENTS WILL FOLLOW. The College of Food, Agriculture and Environmental Sciences has always had a strong international bent, with more than half its majors gaining an international experience before they graduate. To convince the rest, said Dean Bruce McPherson, “we need more faculty to pull them through by creating courses” and engaging in international research and collaborations themselves. “You have to develop a culture among that faculty that says, ‘We are global players.’”

MAKE STUDY ABROAD WORTH COLLEGES’ WHILE. Enrollment revenues from study abroad used to flow to the Office of International Affairs, but now they go to the sponsoring college. Study Abroad Director Grace Johnson welcomed the recent change, saying it puts colleges “much more in the driver’s seat and gives them all the more incentive to think about their strategies for study abroad and curriculum integration.”

East Asian Languages Professor Galal Walker and graduate student Briun Greene

will provide hundreds of thousands of dollars in fellowships to allow future Indian faculty to conduct PhD research, receive mentoring, and earn a master’s degree in teaching in Columbus.

“The idea is to train STEM faculty at the world-class level,” said Pradhan. “Thousands upon thousands of universities and colleges have opened up in India with practically no (such) faculty.” He hopes to speed up the 10 years of training customarily required.

“Other universities in India are watching this project. It has huge potential,” said Pradhan, who taught radiation physics in India last spring as a Fulbright scholar, one of 14 Ohio State faculty so honored in 2013-2014. Pradhan, who emigrated from India as a teen, had never before ventured outside his laboratory on a project like this, but felt emboldened by OSU’s internationalization efforts. The big U.S. land-grant universities “have the most experience in providing higher education to masses of people,” said Pradhan, and Ohio State can “lead the pack.”

Pradhan is not alone in that belief. “There’s a certain hunger for helping this university realize its goal of global eminence. It’s become everybody’s narrative,” said Kalu.

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